



Fort Benning to train digitally *New systems work to clear fog of war*

By Spc. Brian Trapp/*The Bayonet*

FORT BENNING, Ga. (TRADOC News Service, Aug. 8, 2003) -- Fort Benning was selected as a Maneuver Control System-Light Center of Excellence, and the U.S. Army Infantry School will incorporate digital training into a number of courses.

This was decided at a Training and Doctrine Command Digital Training Conference, held recently at Fort Gordon, Ga.

The Army Battle Command System and two components of it, the Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below, or FBCB2, and the Maneuver Control System-Light, will be taught at Fort Benning.

The FBCB2 is like the NorthStar system used in cars today but with added capabilities. It is able to be configured to go into most tactical vehicles.

The MCS-L operates on a laptop in tactical operations centers, brigade through division, and will be used for operations planning and battle tracking.

FBCB2 training will be incorporated into the Infantry Officer Basic Course and the Basic NCO Course. MCS-L training will be incorporated into the Infantry Officer Advanced Course and the Advanced NCO Course. There are also plans to provide Army Battle Command System awareness training to all infantrymen.

"Army Battle Command System enables leaders to exercise command and control by providing them a visual means to see enemy and friendly forces, and the ability to arrange and maneuver their forces to accomplish missions," according to the Army Battle Command System Leader's Reference Guide, Version 6.2, Feb. 12, 2002. "By sharing information through ABCS, commanders take the critical first step toward achieving effective command and control."

"The Centers of Excellence is TRADOC's first step to resource digital training in TRADOC," said Reuben Maynard, a digital concepts analyst with the Directorate of Operations and Training. "The Centers of Excellence puts the right resources in the right places to get the best return on their investment. The immediate training load for MCS-L does not currently warrant conducting training at every TRADOC school."

The U.S. Army Infantry School's intent is to pilot a MCS-L operator course in March with a small student load, about 400 students, in fiscal 2004. Full training capability, about 2,000 students, is planned for fiscal 2005.

This training will complement Stryker and Bradley training, Maynard said. The 29th Infantry Regiment has been the lead in digital training and currently conducts FBCB2 training for Bradley master gunners and mechanized leaders going to FBCB2-equipped units.

TRADOC provided \$2.08 million to renovate the classrooms into digital training facilities and hire contract instructors for the near term, Maynard said.

The contract instructors will fill in until TRADOC provides the right mix of military and contractor personnel to conduct the training.

"The renovation of classrooms 1B through 4B in Infantry Hall is the key piece to meeting the March date," Maynard said. "If classrooms are completed on time, then the project managers for FBCB2 and MCS-L will install equipment in the classrooms and train the contract instructors and key personnel."

"Both systems are still evolving in the development process," Maynard said. "Based on needs and requirements from operations in Afghanistan, FBCB2 developed a system using satellite communications instead of a terrestrial-based radio. This enabled units to maintain situational awareness over the extremely long distances of up to 300 kilometers, as experienced in Iraq."

"FBCB2 and MCS-L are enablers," he said. "They provide a means to share a level of situational awareness that we never have been able to accomplish. The systems greatly speed the distribution of both friendly and opposing force information and the orders and reports that a unit needs to transmit to accomplish their missions."

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